

A PRACTICAL

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BY

C. H. WOLFE

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A PRACTICAL TREATISE

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TEETH.

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A PRACTICAL Treatise on the Teeth.



The amount of information possessed by the public in reference to the Teeth,—their preservation, treatment when diseased, and their important relation to the entire economy of the human system is comparatively small, and much of that which is considered knowledge, is erroneous. Many, even otherwise intelligent people, are sadly deficient in a proper appreciation of the subject and not unfrequently suffer from protracted derangements of health which have their unsuspected origin in the dental organs. The object of this article will be to correct certain popular erroneous ideas and to impart such information as will prove of practical value to the Public; and it will be a gratifying indication, if the subject will receive such serious attention as its importance demands.

The different parts which, in combination, constitute the mouth, form a very important and complicated portion of the animal body; connected as it is by sympathetic relations to the entire organism, containing the Tongue, Teeth, Gums, and Ridges, in which the Teeth are imbedded, receiving the secretion of various glands; and being the organ of speech and mastication, it is not only the most expressive and characteristic, but also the most important of all the features. The Teeth are valu-

able organs of the system, their development is one of the most curious and interesting of the physiological processes; they are the hardest portions of the body. Teeth are composed of (1) the Pulp, commonly called nerve, occupying the chamber in the crown and the canal extending through the root; (2) the Dentine, which constitutes the largest part of the tooth; (3) the Enamel, which forms the covering and protection of the crown; (4) the Cementum, which covers the root. The exposed part of a tooth—that above the gum—is called the Crown; that which is held within the socket, the Root; and the constricted part between the crown and the root, the Neck.

The first or temporary, commonly called the Milk Teeth are twenty in number,—ten in each jaw,—consisting of two central and two lateral incisors; two canines, or Eye teeth, and four molars or double teeth. The eruption of the temporary teeth varies somewhat in different children, but as a rule the average time of the commencement is from the fifth month and by the second year usually all have made their appearance.

Under favorable conditions the temporary teeth ought not to decay, but simply loose their hold in the jaw from absorption of their roots to make room for their successors, and drop out white and clean. These teeth are smaller than the permanent and of a less firm and solid texture; when therefore decay commences in them, it proceeds more rapidly, and for this reason they need more attention and care than the permanent ones. The neglect of the first teeth is a great mistake and gives rise to much mischief, the retention of the first teeth is of great importance in regulating the advance of the second. The exemption of children from the suffering caused by decay of the teeth and of the parent from

the consequent inconvenience and pain, will be best secured by constant attention to them from their first appearance, the general health of the child will be promoted by keeping these organs in such a condition that mastication can be performed without pain, otherwise the child will soon learn to avoid that which is painful, and, by swallowing its food without proper mastication, will entail upon itself all the evils of indigestion. In infancy the mother should make it a part of her daily care of the child to secure the perfect cleanliness of its teeth, becoming thus accustomed to it, the child when old enough to use the brush will find it impossible to feel comfortable without having cleaned its teeth, and the practice thus commenced will be almost sure to be continued through life; small, soft tooth brushes and pleasant dentrifices are now manufactured exactly suited for the purpose. In cases where, in spite of all the care that can be given, the teeth will decay or where the eruption of the second set takes place before the temporary teeth are displaced by the absorption of their roots; the child should be taken to an intelligent dentist who is capable of deciding in regard to the best treatment to be adopted. Premature extraction and loss of the temporary teeth is the cause of most of the irregularities and consequent disfiguration of so many mouths; and when it is remembered, how much is involved in this loss, not only the ability to masticate the food and to articulate correctly, but the comeliness of the face through life; the importance of attention in season will not fail to be appreciated. If decay commences, the same care should be given to prevent its extension as would be given to the permanent teeth, and all cavities should be filled with some of the various preparations adapted to the purpose, now in the hands of

the profession. A good rule is, to have a dentist examine the mouth, after the child is three years old, at least twice a year or oftener, if necessary.

The second or permanent teeth, are thirty-two in number, sixteen in each jaw, including twelve not found in the first set, viz: eight bicusped, or half molars and four wisdom teeth, their eruption begins about the sixth year, and is terminated usually at the fourteenth, except the wisdom teeth, which appear from the seventeenth to the twenty-second year. It must be remembered that the eruption of the second teeth, begins while the first set is still in the mouth, thus, about the sixth year, the first permanent molars, four in number, one in each side of the upper and lower jaws, make their appearance.

The importance of proper attention to the cleanliness of the teeth, can hardly be overstated, many people are under the erroneous impression, that brushing the teeth is injurious to them. Never was there a greater mistake, an old saying is: that Cleanliness is next to Godliness—and this is particularly applicable to the mouth, as being, so to speak, the entrance to the body, through which all nourishment has to pass; as a preventive of diseases of the teeth and gums, thorough cleanliness is of unquestioned importance, they should be brushed at least twice a day, on rising and retiring, and a toothpick made of wood or quill, should be used after eating, and all particles of food carefully removed from between the teeth. The brush should not be too stiff, and should be carried up and down on the outside of the teeth, and not traversely, also, every portion of the inner surfaces should be cleaned. The use of a good tooth powder once a day is advisable, but these powders should contain no acids, or gritty substances, such as charcoal, etc.

The deposit called tartar, which collects more or less about the teeth, of all persons, differs in different individuals, and its presence is more or less hurtful, according to its character and quantity. In some cases its influence is exceedingly pernicious, causing the gums to become swollen, inflamed, spongy; pus oozing out from between the necks of the teeth, and absorption or waste of the sockets of the teeth taking place. The gums become exceedingly painful, and bleed on the slightest touch, and on this account there is no effort made to keep the mouth clean; the tartar accumulates rapidly, and the result is the destruction more or less speedily of the sockets in which the teeth are implanted, and the loosening of the teeth until they drop out. These, however, are not the only results; the breath becomes fetid, the secretions of the mouth are poisoned by pus, indigestion, loss of appetite, headache, neuralgia and general derangement of the health, follows. That derangement of the digestive functions, and consequent impairment of the whole economy of the system, may result from a diseased condition of the mouth, especially when such a condition continues for years, as is usually the case, is too well established to require an argument. The presence of decayed teeth and roots, ulcerated or suppurating gums, accumulations of tartar etc., must necessarily vitiate the secretions of the mouth and cause irritation more or less severe of the mucous membrane of the stomach. Many people suffer for years from indigestion, their digestive functions are carried on with such difficulty, as to make the introduction of food, a source of illness, and discomfort. The effects of a prolonged source of ill health of this kind, are loss of flesh, sallowness of complexion, weakness, an incapacity for any exertion, headache, offensive

breath, etc. Large quantities of anti-dyspeptic drugs are taken daily, without giving relief, or improving the vigor of the stomach. The causes involved in producing this affection are various, but there are cases,—and many more than is generally supposed—where the cause can be traced directly to the teeth. In a mouth where there are a number, or sometimes nearly all the teeth, in a decayed condition, there is a fearful amount of poison generated. Aside from the decay of the tooth substance itself, particles of food which are lodged after each meal, in the cavities formed by decay,—and any one would be surprised at the quantity of decayed matter which is stored in these cavities,—undergo fermentation and decomposition. The gums in these circumstances are always in a diseased state, so that by pressing slightly upon them, matter oozes out from between the necks of the teeth. What becomes of all this poisonous matter; the result of decay, decomposition, diseased gums, etc? It intermingles with the fluids of the mouth, and in swallowing is carried into the stomach. During eating, the movements of mastication naturally exert a certain amount of pressure upon the diseased parts, thereby extracting and removing a large quantity of poisonous matter, which is, in consequence of an increased flow of saliva, saturated and impregnated with the food and passed into the stomach, now consider the constant absorption of so much poison to have continued for years, will not the quantity taken into the system, have reached frightful proportions; add to this the inability of masticating the food properly, and thereby taxing the digestive organs with an extra function, which the teeth should have performed, and the cause of dyspepsia, of many cases is explained, or else it must be supposed that

the introduction of all this poison, and improperly divided food into the stomach is perfectly harmless, in its effects upon that organ, as well as upon the system, at large.

The course of treatment for those patients who suffer from dyspepsia, in connection with decayed teeth, is self-evident, the taking of immense quantities of drugs fail to give them relief, because they do not remove the cause, but assist in aggravating the affection by their additional taxation of the digestive organs; they must place themselves under the care of the dentist, have their mouths put into a healthy condition, and then they may expect relief, and a ceasing of that troublesome disease. The exhalations from a mouth so diseased as has previously been described, may, and no doubt often does, produce an injurious effect upon the bronchial tubes and lungs, and may even be the exciting cause of consumption.

These being facts, it is wonderful that so many, otherwise intelligent people, neglect the teeth of their children, allowing them to grow up without having acquired the habit of keeping the mouth scrupulously clean; paying no attention to the condition of the teeth, until an exposed nerve speaks with a voice that will not be silenced, announcing the mischief which has been allowed to proceed unchecked. Still more wonderful is it, that so many fail to appreciate the importance of taking care of their own teeth, until decay, diseased gums, and consequent suffering compel them; then, when the demand has become imperative, their chief thought seems to be, not, how best to prevent further mischief, and to retain what is left of their dental organs, in as perfect a condition as may be, but how cheaply immediate palliation of their trouble can be secured. Besides the useful-

ness of the teeth for speech and mastication, the favourable impression made upon the general health by the ability to masticate the food, the comfort of a pure breath and wholesome saliva ; they are important in their relation, to the beauty of the human countenance. It is true that men can often conceal the imperfections of their dental arrangements, by letting the eaves of a heavy mustache, overshadow their mouths. But to woman, to hide whose smile would be to take away half the sunshine of life, and to whom nature has kindly refused, the growth that would deprive us of it, there is no element of her beauty which can take the place of white, even, well shaped teeth. Surely these reasons enumerated, are enough to induce all, to pay that attention to them, upon which their appearance, preservation and usefulness depend.

While all the other portions of the body are endowed with the power to repair injury and replace lost tissue, the teeth do not possess such power, and, if decay destroys any portion of their structure, there is no possibility of its restoration, except by art. The great advantages to be derived from an early attendance to any evidence of decay upon the teeth, so as to arrest and combat it, can not be too seriously impressed upon the minds of all. These advantages are various, first there is a great saving of money, the cavity formed by recent decay being small, the expense for time and material required for filling the same will be in proportion ; next the tooth is saved from further decay and retained in the mouth as a useful organ, and then there is the principal desideratum, which is the prevention of suffering and pain. Every one, no doubt, is acquainted with the fact, that when decay has once encroached upon a tooth, it will invariably cause its complete destruction, if left alone and not

arrested by operative means. In time, as this decay continues the nerve is laid bare from its bony covering and then, when subjected to external influences, commences that excruciating pain, the toothache. How many have not suffered the fearful agonies of an exposed nerve, what numbers of sleepless nights has it not caused to those poor sufferers? The existence of many people, otherwise healthy, is reduced to perfect misery from the constant effects of toothache, they can not sit down and enjoy a good hearty meal, for while they are masticating their food, they are full of fear of touching some sore spot, and are obliged to select a few of their sound teeth to do all the work. Now, if by an early attendance to any sign of decay, the comfort of a good, sound set of teeth, as well as exemption from so much suffering, can be secured at a trifling expense, would it not seem strange, if any intelligent person should neglect to do so.

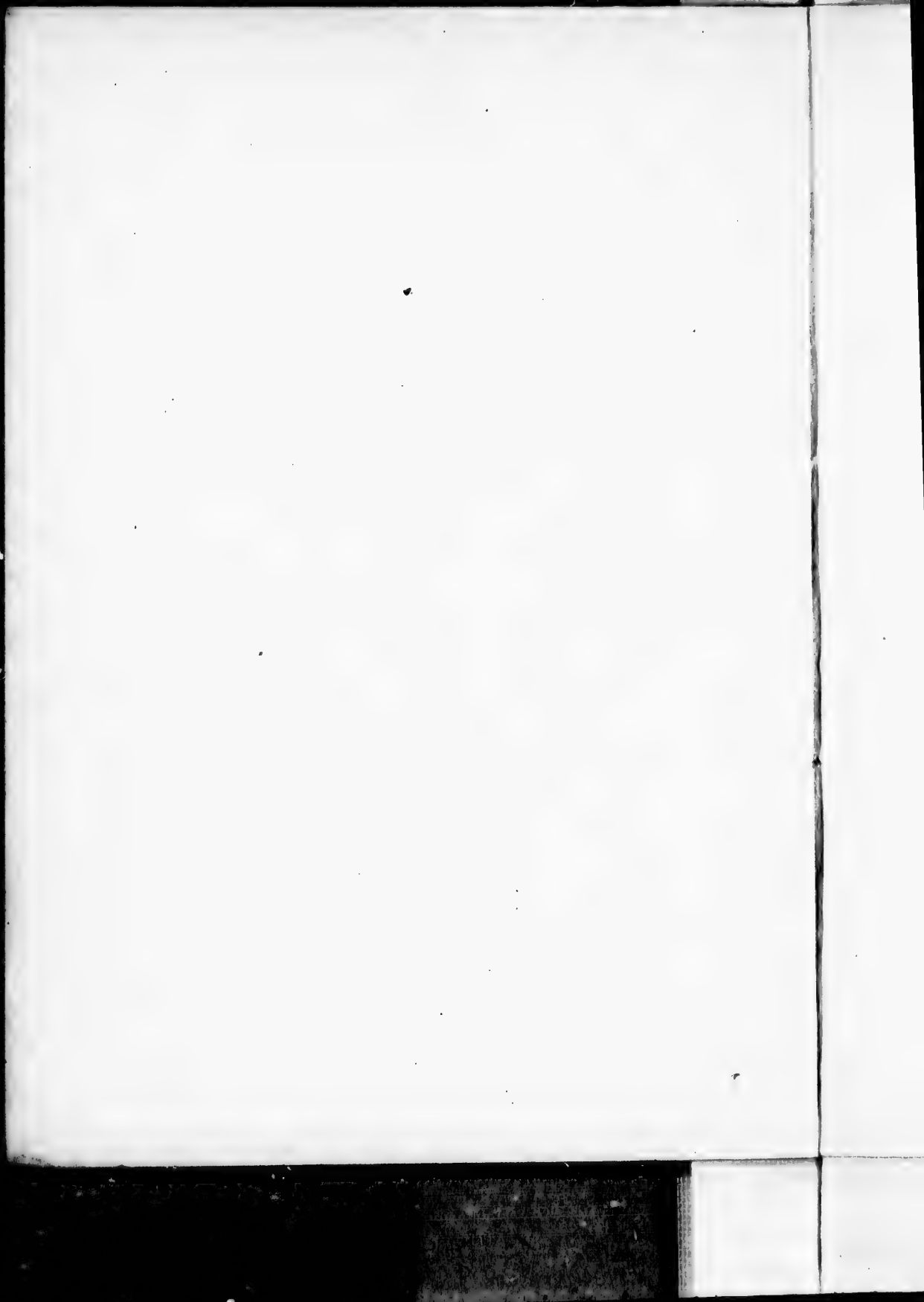
Many people are under the impression that filling teeth is extremely painful and that the nerve of every tooth which is to be filled must be destroyed and removed; such is not the case by any means. The operation of filling teeth where the nerve has not as yet become exposed, is almost entirely painless; the nerve is not destroyed or touched by the instrument, because it is still covered by dentine, and in cases where it is exposed, the same is now very rarely destroyed, but covered and protected by artificial means. Toothache, resulting from an exposed nerve can in nearly all cases, be cured almost instantly, without resorting to extraction. Does filling of teeth save them? Let the following few lines answer that question. In the practice of modern dentistry the work of fitting teeth is carried to such perfection, that not only is decay arrested and a tooth, which seemed destined to rapid destru-

ction, so repaired that it will last in many cases a life time, but even where the greater portion of a tooth is gone it can be built up and made perfectly useful.

The substitution of improved forceps, each one adapted to the particular shape of the tooth, has rendered the extraction of teeth a comparatively easy and much less painful operation, than the former employment of the Key. There never was claw on bird or beast that was the cause of such anguish of apprehension, such howls of agony, as that diabolical instrument, looking like a vulture's talon, but known by the name of the Key. It was a key indeed ; it may have opened the door of Heaven to the sufferer in due time ; but while the bolt was turning, the victim though he was in the other place. Now a patient comes in ; takes a few whiffs of anæsthetic, has a number of teeth submitted to the embrace of the gentlemanly forceps which lift them from their sockets, as one takes out the pegs of a solitaire-board ; comes to, stares about him ; asks when you are going to begin ; is told it is all over ; bursts into expressions of hysteric gratitude ; wants to hug all mankind, and make the human race happy at once ; sobers down presently ; ties up his face, and takes to retirement for a few days, perusing " Zimmerman on Solitude."

There is naturally, on the part of all those who contemplate wearing artificial teeth, a desire to know something about them. In the foregoing remarks the attention of the reader has been called to the very great importance of striving to preserve the natural teeth ; that artificial teeth can,—in spite of the perfection to which their manufacture is carried,—replace the natural ones in every respect can not be supposed by any intelligent person, and for this reason the value of the natural teeth must

be apparent. But where the natural ones have been lost or where they have been reduced by disease to mere stumps, then the possession of artificial teeth becomes of infinite value. The effects of the loss of the natural teeth are various, the speech is effected to such a degree that it is quite painful to witness the efforts made by the unfortunate person to bite his consonants out of the alphabet; for he is reduced to the condition of the infant, whose boneless gums are unfit for any task but the caressing pressure of the maternal mouthful. The humbler, but still necessary function of mastication is impossible. The jaws and muscles of the face undergo a remarkable change in their position, imparting to the features the appearance of old age; this is a point of the greatest importance to the patient who contemplates wearing artificial teeth. The necessity of supplying the jaws, after the natural teeth have been lost, as soon as practicable with artificial ones, will be recognized, after stating that then the least possible change of the parts has taken place, the jaws are still in their natural position, and the patient, on introducing artificial teeth, will find it very much easier, to speak, masticate and become used to their presence, than in cases where the absence of the natural teeth has been of long duration. The selection and insertion of artificial teeth should be conducted with care; and with reference to their appearance they should be natural as to shape, size, and color. The advantages of artificial teeth are numerous; they prevent the muscles of the cheeks from falling in, and in that way preserve the natural contour of the face, the jaws are retained in their proper relation to each other, they serve perfectly for articulation, and though one can hardly crack a peach stone, as some can with their native molars, or use them for biting off the heads of iron-nails, they can do good service in the respectable and responsible duties of mastication.







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